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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KINGSTON 001197

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (BENT) AND WHA/PDA
STATE ALSO FOR INL/LP, EB/TPP, AND EB/IFD
STATE ALSO FOR CA/OCS/ACS/WHA HALDANE
STATE PASS OPIC FOR TABERNAKI
CUSTOMS MIAMI FOR LOWEN AND MAHABIR
SANTO DOMINGO FOR FCS, FAS, AND LEGATT
STATE PASS USTR FOR A. GASH-DURKIN
DOJ FOR OPDAT/ R LIPMAN
TREASURY FOR L LAMONICA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [JM](#) [SNAR](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [ELAB](#)

SUBJECT: KINGSTON POL/ECON ROUNDUP: APR 22 - MAY 6, 2005

REF: KINGSTON 01106

1. This week's topics:

-- Police Under Attack from Kingston Gunmen
-- Latest Crime Statistics
-- Prime Minister Rolls Out the Goodies
-- PNP Sources Report Concerns of a Party Divided
-- Mexican President Fox Visits Jamaica
-- Air Jamaica Settles Labor Dispute

Police Under Attack from Kingston Gunmen

2. On the evening of May 3 in Kingston, two gunmen on a motorcycle shot and killed a Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) constable in a marked vehicle stopped at a traffic light in front of the Canadian High Commission. Nearby JCF officers and a private security guard gave chase and killed the two gunmen, one of whom was subsequently confirmed to be the brother of Michael Christopher &Dudus8 Coke, a well known, JLP-linked West Kingston &area leader.8 In related attacks over the next 24 hours, three JCF officers and one private security guard were killed, including when gunmen opened fire on the Crossroads police station in the downtown area near the Embassy. No suspects have been apprehended in any of the killings, which are thought to be retaliation for the fatal shooting of Tivoli Gardens gang leader Donovan Griffith, a.k.a. &Zion Train,8 by JCF officers in late April. The police believe that the Tivoli Gardens &Shower Posse8 gang is avenging Griffith's death by retaliating against all security officials: police, military, and private security guards. Political leaders have spoken out against the violence, and West Kingston Member of Parliament Bruce Golding has appealed to his constituents for peace. (Septel).

Latest Crime Statistics

3. The latest Crime Statistics Report (CSR) compiled by the JCF for the period covering January 1 through May 1 described a 33 percent increase in homicides compared with the same period in 2004. Last year saw a record number of 1,469 murders committed in Jamaica. Twenty-four percent of the homicides were believed to be gang related. A total of 2,748 major crimes were reported this year, which actually represents a slight decrease since 2004. Government officials have claimed that the decrease in the number of major crimes committed is a reflection of the success of the Ministry of National Security's Operation Kingfish.

Prime Minister Rolls Out the Goodies

4. In his contribution to the 2005/2006 budget debate on April 26, Prime Minister P.J. Patterson announced nearly USD 65 million in social spending to finance employment and housing projects, to be administered by Members of Parliament in their constituencies. Parliamentarians who had requested an increase in their control over public funds have recently been attacked in the media, but Patterson staunchly defended the program, which he said would counter social decay, especially in inner-city communities. Patterson's aggressive social spending, which represents a 25 percent increase over 2004 funding available to MPs, may be what some Embassy sources are calling Patterson's &swan song8) a departing Prime Minister's generous social budget. Several sources have offered that this is likely to be Patterson's last budget debate as Prime Minister, and that he will announce his retirement within the next twelve months (ref A).

15. (SBU) On May 5, Portia Simpson Miller presented her strategy for Jamaica the Way Forward at the 2005 Political Leadership Forum, a series of presentations by prime ministerial candidates hosted by the Mona School of Business at the University of the West Indies. Simpson Miller, the Minister of Local Government, Community Development, and Sports and front-runner candidate to succeed P.J. Patterson as People's National Party (PNP) leader and Prime Minister, addressed a standing-room only crowd that was boisterous in its support of the populist candidate. The event was the final such forum, which has hosted presentations by Bruce Golding, leader of the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP), and five PNP candidates. Embassy sources report growing concern within the PNP that the unprecedented number of leadership candidates is dividing the party. They report that Patterson has suggested the idea of a primary vote among PNP delegates that would narrow the field to two or three candidates before the election takes place. The concept reportedly has not been embraced by all candidates.

Mexican President Fox Visits Jamaica

16. On May 4, Mexican President Vicente Fox visited Kingston, accompanied by a delegation of 25 government ministers, parliamentarians, and private sector representatives. Media reports indicate that bilateral trade and investment between the GOM and GOJ were at the top of the agenda for the visit, and that Fox announced that his government would review the San Jose Accord, under which Jamaica purchases oil from Mexico and Venezuela, with a view to increasing Jamaica's access to available oil resources. Other issues reportedly covered during the visit include recent developments at the OAS, both countries' support for the FTAA, and a commitment to work together to assist Haiti. Post will seek an MFA read-out on the visit from a senior MFA official on May 11.

Air Jamaica Settles Labor Dispute

17. Following protracted pay negotiations that threatened both the embattled airline's future and the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that governs the GOJ's relationship with local trade unions, Air Jamaica reached an agreement with its pilots that satisfied the Jamaica Airline Pilots Association (JALPA) and its representative body, the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU). Although the BITU has continued its threat to withdraw from the MOU, the pilots agreed to a 5.6 percent pay cut and a reduction in various allowances. Minister of Labor and Social Security Horace Dalley chaired the marathon negotiating session, which lasted approximately 19 hours before it was signed by Air Jamaica's newly-installed management team (septel).

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